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Peking Ends Silence on Border Talks, Assails Moscow's Stance TCP 01-75 SUPP

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TRENDS

In Communist Propaganda

S U P P L E M E N T

PEKING ENDS SILENCE ON BORDER TALKS, ASSAILS MOSCOW'S STANCE

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PEKING ENDS SILENCE ON BORDER TALKS, ASSAILS MOSCOW'S STANCE

Peking has recently broken its silence on the substance of the five-year-old Sino-Soviet border talks, blaming Moscow for lack of progress and refuting repeated Soviet accusations against China, while at the same time taunting Moscow to show "good faith" by meeting new Chinese border demands. A lengthy discussion of the border talks appeared in an article in the "first issue of the 1974 HISTORICAL STUDIES," a Chinese journal evidently just revived after ceasing publication during the cultural revolution.* The journal has not yet become available in translation, but the article on the Sino-Soviet border issue was reprinted in installments at the turn of the year by the Hong Kong communist newspaper TA KUNG PAO.

The new article by Shih Yu-hsin--not further identified--is entitled "Refute the Fabricators of Lies--On Several Questions Concerning the Sino-Soviet Border." It is Peking's most comprehensive and direct response to several Soviet assessments of the border problem that have been publicized since 1972, as Moscow sought to place the full blame on China for lack of progress in the border talks.

The article contains the first detailed Chinese restatement of the PRC position on the border issue since the original 8 October 1969 PRC Foreign Ministry statement, issued just prior to the 20 October 1969 start of the Peking border talks. It follows closely on the heels of the first public Peking mention--in November--of a preliminary border understanding with the USSR, which had been reached during the September 1969 Peking meeting between Chou En-lai and Kosygin that prepared the way for the start of formal border talks. The reference to the understanding was contained in the PRC 6 November message to Soviet ruling organs on the October Revolution anniversary and was publicized only in broadcasts for foreign audiences.

* An 11 December NCNA report listed the title of this article in announcing the table of contents of the "first issue of the 1974 HISTORICAL STUDIES," which NCNA said would be published in the "very near future." A journal of the same title was published in the PRC up to the mid-1960's. Similarly, NCNA on 9 July 1974 had announced the publication of the "No. 1 issue of CHINA'S FOREIGN TRADE quarterly," marking the first time a journal with that name had appeared in China since the mid-1960's.

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Shih's article contended that the border negotiations have now reached a "deadlock" and that "nothing has come" of them because Moscow has refused to abide by the Chou-Kosygin agreement. The article asserted that in the 1969 meeting "the Soviet side expressed full concurrence" with the Chinese proposal that the two sides first sign a temporary accord to maintain the border status quo, avert armed conflicts, and withdraw armed forces from "disputed areas," and then begin work on a formal border agreement. The Shih article, unlike the 6 November PRC message to Soviet rulers, did not refer to provisions for non-aggression and non-use of force as part of such a preliminary accord. The 6 November Chinese message contained the first public Peking assertion that it was willing to agree to a preliminary accord on the border that would include pledges of non-aggression and non-use of force, if Moscow agreed to a mutual withdrawal of forces from "disputed areas" along the frontier.*

Shih's article in HISTORICAL STUDIES claimed that the Soviet refusal to sign a preliminary agreement and withdraw forces from the disputed areas had prevented the Peking border talks from proceeding "free from threat," which in turn prevented even a beginning on the delineation of boundary lines in preparation for a new border agreement. The article restated China's original five-point position expressed in the 8 October 1969 PRC Foreign Ministry statement, characterizing these five points as "the correct path for the peaceful settlement of the Sino-Soviet border question." This suggests a firmer Chinese stand now than in October 1969, when the Chinese statement had merely expressed "hope" that Moscow would "seriously consider" China's stand so that "positive results" might ensue.

CALL FOR SOVIET
"GOOD FAITH"

The only passage in Shih's article that might be read as an indication of some flexibility in the Chinese position listed a series of steps Moscow could take to show its sincerity about improving Sino-Soviet relations and settling the border problem. The article called on

* Moscow has denied that such an agreement was reached at the Chou-Kosygin meeting and has consistently opposed Peking's call for withdrawal from disputed areas. It rejected the PRC ploy in a 26 November 1974 Soviet Presidium reply to the Chinese message and in Brezhnev's speech in Ulaan Bataar the same day. The Chinese message is discussed in the TRENDS of 13 November 1974, pages 3-5, and the Soviet response in the TRENDS of 27 November 1974, pages 5-6.

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Moscow to "show its good faith by doing a thing or two" and then listed these proposals:

- + Withdrawal of Soviet armed forces from Mongolia
- + Reduction of Soviet armed forces on the border to the level during Khrushchev's rule
- + Stopping military exercises and provocations along the Chinese border
- + Stopping the sending of spies into China
- + Signing the preliminary accord on the border agreed to during the 1969 Chou-Kosygin meeting

These proposals in the main appear polemical and not designed to appeal seriously to the Soviet leadership; however, the first three proposals provide Moscow with options leading to an easing of border tension without its having to acknowledge Peking's border claims. In addition, all the points, except the last one, avoid the central contentious issue in Peking's original formal five-point border stand--the demand for a Soviet withdrawal from "disputed areas." Peking has not previously set forth such a specific set of suggestions for improving Sino-Soviet relations, although there were earlier proposals that Moscow withdraw Soviet forces from Mongolia to prove its proclaimed desire to ease world tension: Chou En-lai had so proposed at the 10th CCP Congress in August 1973, as did Chiao Kuan-hua at the United Nations in October 1973.

The bulk of Shih's article gave no indication that there would be immediate progress toward a solution of Sino-Soviet border issues and firmly refuted Soviet accounts of the historical background of the border problem. It included a lengthy section on the development of the 19th Century "unequal" treaties between Tsarist Russia and imperial China. Employing heavy sarcasm to argue that Moscow in recent years has reversed its former position in support of Chinese border claims, the article pointed to earlier Soviet assessments of the border problem which favored Peking's claims and were endorsed as late as the early 1960's by such Soviet leaders as Foreign Minister Gromyko. Peking repeated the standard charge that the present Soviet leadership is even more ambitious and expansionist toward China than the Tsarist rulers, adding the specific charge that Moscow has expansionistic designs on China's western province of Sinkiang.

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MOSCOW Official Soviet media have not yet reacted to the Chinese article. But Moscow's unofficial Radio Peace and Progress in Mandarin on 1 January did respond with a station commentary identified as the first of a series entitled "Who is Actually Obstructing the Solution of the Soviet-Chinese Border Question." The commentary, citing Chinese article, deplored Peking's "unilateral, ultimatum-like demands" for Soviet withdrawal from disputed territory as the prime impediment to progress in the border talks and recalled Brezhnev's November 26th rejection of this Chinese demand.

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